



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY CLERK / ELECTIONS

701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 210, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4076
831-454-2060 TOLL-FREE: 866-282-5900 FAX: 831 454-2445 TDD: 831-454-2123
E-MAIL: gail.pellerin@co.santa-cruz.ca.us
Web Sites: www.sccoclerk.com & www.votescount.com

GAIL L. PELLERIN, COUNTY CLERK

July 30, 2007

Office of the Secretary of State
1500 11th St., 5th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Statement on Top-to-Bottom Review

The Honorable Debra Bowen and Secretary of State Staff,

Let me be very clear – there is no perfect election. Furthermore, there is no election system that you cannot tamper with, especially when you are given time and complete access. That fact has never been disputed. It is the people and security measures that guard all of our nation's devices and treasures, from nuclear weapons to our Declaration of Independence, that prevent those who want to destroy or tamper from succeeding.

No computer system could pass the assault made by your team of computer scientists. In fact, I think my 9 and 12-year-old kids could find ways to break into the voting equipment if they had unfettered access.

It is the procedures and processes implemented by the county elections officials that ensure the security and accuracy of our voting systems. My colleagues and I are dedicated elections administrators who work countless hours to deliver safe and accurate elections to our voters. We conduct ourselves as nonpartisan caretakers of our democratic process, encouraging voters to register and vote, assisting voters who require help, and ensuring that every eligible vote is counted accurately. We maintain transparent operations where the public is invited to observe our absentee ballot processing, testing of voting equipment, election night tallying, and election auditing after Election Day. We work with our voting system vendors and fellow users to continually improve the voting system and enhance security. We are passionate about the elections process and the precious gift of voting.

I want every registered voter to vote. And, if you are eligible and not registered, I want you to register and vote. I feel very frustrated when I hear voters decide not to vote because they think their vote won't count. I am confident in our Sequoia Voting System used in Santa Cruz County and can guarantee that every eligible vote is counted accurately.

Our county Grand Jury conducted a review of our county's voting system. They invested nearly one year in their investigation. The jurors conducted hours of interviews with our staff; visited our office on numerous occasions; toured our warehouse and equipment storage facility; witnessed our testing and programming of voting equipment; read through all of our training materials, troubleshooting guides, security plan, and voter education brochures; attended poll worker training classes; served as poll workers on Election Day; observed election night counting; and watched our canvass and auditing procedures. Their report, which was released this month, praises Santa Cruz County for our effectiveness in implementing a new federally-mandated voting system. Moreover, it concluded that Santa Cruz County's voting system is fair, accurate and secure. In addition, it provides a number of helpful recommendations and findings that will improve and enhance our election services in Santa Cruz County. It supports our common goal to encourage people to vote and serve in our polls. Moreover, it was given the time, care and consideration this issue deserves and cost our taxpayers little.

Page 2
Statement on Top-to-Bottom Review
July 30, 2007

I am proud and honored to be the Santa Cruz County Clerk. I am especially proud of my elections team in Santa Cruz County, that includes our full-time and part-time staff; college students; my county co-workers -- many of whom leave their jobs on Election Day to help serve at the polls; our four City Clerks; our fabulous poll workers who work tirelessly to ensure that voters have convenient access to voting on Election Day; and our voters who refuse to stay home and not vote because of partisan politicians who want to leave the decision-making to the few and the chosen.

I urge the Secretary of State and staff to join county election officials in our goal to encourage voter participation. I invite you to visit our offices and warehouses and view our processes and procedures. I encourage you to accept our invitations to participate in our California Association of Clerks and Election Officials' committees that meet monthly to discuss issues such as implementation of the Help America Vote Act, improve ways to serve voters with specific needs, and design programs to serve military and overseas voters. Moreover, once you review the findings of your review team, if you have suggestions for improvements, I urge you to provide specific recommendations for counties to implement in sufficient time so as they do not jeopardize the upcoming elections, including the November 2007 UDEL, the February 2008 Presidential Primary, and the Direct Primary and General in 2008.

Let's move forward, together, to make California's voting system even greater. We are the leaders who implemented voter verified paper audit trails, we are the leaders who established parallel monitoring, and we are the state with the strictest voting equipment certification program. Now, more than ever, we need to work together to develop a rational plan to continue to make improvements to ensure that California's voting systems are the best in the nation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gail L. Pellerin", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Gail L. Pellerin
County Clerk